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Istook Secures Funds to Create Jobs in Rural Oklahoma

Washington, D.C. – Six rural Oklahoma counties will benefit from \$500,000 in federal funding to create new jobs in those areas, Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Warr Acres) announced Wednesday.

Istook, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, obtained funding for Rural Enterprises of Oklahoma, Inc. (REI) Rural Business and Resource Center in Seminole, which provides economic assistance to Seminole, Pottawatomie, Lincoln, Okfuskee, Hughes and Pontotoc counties. This funding brings the total amount secured by Rep. Istook for the center to \$1 million over the past three years.

The business center is in its third year assisting local businesses and entrepreneurs in obtaining business resources and technical assistance to create and expand jobs in the region.

"One of Oklahoma's greatest resources is our people," Istook commented. "Unfortunately, too many young people leave the state every year because we don't have enough opportunities here. I'm committed to changing that. Groups like REI are working to create jobs that will both benefit the state's economy and help us keep our young people here."

"This is wonderful news for the six-county service area for Seminole State College," said Seminole State College President Jim Utterback. "Seminole County and surrounding communities have benefited from the support of Congressman Istook for several years now, and this is a wonderful way to continue the economic growth of this area at a time when it's desperately needed.

"This shows Ernest's continued commitment to our communities and to higher education," Dr. Utterback said.

"I want rural Oklahomans to have the same employment opportunities as anyplace in America," Istook continued. "I'm pleased to work with Seminole State College and REI as they work to provide these opportunities."

The funding was included in H.R. 2862, the Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2006, which passed the House by a vote of 397 to 19. The final version of the legislation now heads to the Senate, which is expected to vote on it later this week.

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